

*Struggle against Injustice in  
Gwendolen*

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## Chapter VII

### Struggle against Injustice in *Gwendolen*

*Gwendolen* is a tale of a black West Indian girl from Jamaica who becomes a victim of child abuse at a very young age and in her adolescence her father indulges in incest with her. Violence and sexual abuse of girl children and women is always hushed up as it tarnishes the reputation of the women. During a lecture in John Jay College of Criminal Justice, at the City University of New York, Emecheta spoke thus: “I gave a lecture at Sussex and a number of girls came to my room afterwards. Eight out of ten had been sexually abused. None of them have ever told. They said, “How can I tell my father? It would be too humiliating” (Umeh, *Emerging* xxx). Buchi Emecheta has taken up the topic of incest which is a taboo in all cultures to showcase the extent to which women are victimised within the domestic sphere.

Gwendolen’s parents neglected her as they were in search of a sophisticated life in London which led to psychological trauma for the child. Gwendolen suffers identity crisis from a very young age “She was christened Gwendolen” (G 9), a European name, which could not be pronounced correctly even by her parents or by her neighbours. Her identity crisis starts with her name, “her mommy could not pronounce it, neither could her Daddy or his people” (G 9), so they started to call her as ‘June-June’. Michael G. Cooke explains the importance of a name to an individual as, “To have a name is to have a means of locating, extending and preserving oneself in a human community, so as to be able to answer the question ‘who?’ with reference to ancestry, current status, and particular bearing, with reference to the full panoply of time” (167).

The name provides an identity to an individual and helps in tracing a person's ancestry and community.

In this way, a name, often regarded as a cultural space that allows for personhood, paradoxically functions to further deconstruct this adolescent female's identity as Jamaican, echoing the chaotic presence of British colonialism on the island of her childhood. Her name becomes a cultural space that allows for a contestation of her affiliation with family members and the community in Jamaica that looks the other way as she is abused. (Mhando 59)

The novel opens with the description of Gwendolen's Daddy preparing to go to England, so he marries her mother for the official purpose; she is the first girl to witness her parents' marriage. "She had no idea where or what England was. But she sensed that her Daddy's people who lived down in Kingston, and who were so incredibly sophisticated 'because they all wore white gloves' thought it a good place." (G 9-10). Gwendolen did not know where the country is but they all call it as a 'Moder Kondry' (G 11) and all her friends had a dream of visiting that country at least once in their life and consider it as their lifetime achievement. "She dreamed that one day she would go to England or to America like Shivorn's aunt, Monica. When they played, Shivorn, Cocoa and herself, they all talked of going overseas" (G 95). The departure of her father has no impact on Gwendolen, as she meets her father intermittently. She is informed that her father is working in ships and would not be able to come home often.

Psychologically, a child who grows in parental care feels secure and confident, but Gwendolen is unable to enjoy that feeling of security. Gwendolen seems not to be so

worried by her father's absence and his departure, because her young mind accepts his absence for it happens to all her friends around her home. Her closest friend Shivorn's father also stays away and she is informed that he has gone to become a well-known boxer and her friend Cocoa's father hardly ever visits her and her mummy. Since they rarely meet their father, the children never felt their absence. Gwendolen builds a strong bond with her mother. Sonia showers Gwendolen with her affection and they both live with her maternal Granny Naomi. Gwendolen gets emotional support from her mother Sonia.

Sonia receives letters and money from her husband now and then. Sonia used to buy eatables and clothing for them and Gwendolen felt very happy. But her happiness was short-lived as Sonia decided to join her husband in England. It is decided that Gwendolen should remain with her Granny Naomi. Gwendolen was shocked as she had thought her mother would always be with her. As Gwendolen is just eight years old she could not accept this separation. The announcement of Sonia's departure made Gwendolen heart-broken.

Gwendolen felt so lost that she cried. Not only did she cry because her Mammy was going, but also it looked as if her Mammy was happy to leave her behind, giving the impression that she was not really wanted ... Gwendolen felt cheated because everybody kept telling her that she was a big 'gal nuh' and should be able to look after her Granny Naomi. Her sadness made her nervous, so she kept tripping and falling on their way to the minibus. Nobody understood how she felt and she could not talk to anybody about it, because she knew she would look stupid. (G 18)

Gwendolen feels really neglected by her parents. Granny is always preoccupied with a lot of work like collecting honey and selling it. It is a hard job, but it is their family business and her Granny needs to continue it for her survival. Granny Naomi is unable to understand the psychological turmoil of her young grand daughter. Sonia's excitement and her preparation to join her husband hurts the young girl. She quickly understands that her cry or pleadings will not stop her mother. Gwendolen has to accept this situation, so she continues to perform her daily duties as usual. She has no one who could understand her pains, or to comfort her in her distress.

The day has finally arrived and her mother bade goodbye to her as her father had done and left her. She is for the first time left alone with her Granny. The night after her mother's departure she cried a lot. Gwendolen usually shares her bed with her mother, but today her absence makes her sleepless the whole night. The next morning Granny pacified her a little but it had no effect on the little girl as she kept longing for her mother. Granny informs her state of mind to Uncle Johnny, a reliable family friend who used to help them. Uncle Johnny has been visiting their house since Gwendolen was born. Her Granny and her mother used to trust him and allowed him into the house as a gratitude for the help he voluntarily does for them while collecting honey.

Gwendolen's neighbours used to touch her cheeks or pull her hair slightly as a mark of mockery, while Uncle Johnny would always touch her thighs. Gwendolen does not find any wrong intention in Johnny's actions. He used to appreciate her and the little girl would respond happily like any other child. "Uncle Johnny winked at her behind Mammy's back, and she winked at him too, just as if they were playing hide-and-seek.

There seemed to be an understanding between her and Uncle Johnny. He was a fine funny man, Uncle Johnny, a good friend of her family and a neighbour” (G12).

Uncle Johnny used to visit Granny regularly and would share drinks with her Granny and stay till late night. One such night, when Gwendolen was asleep she suddenly felt something strange near her. She saw Uncle Johnny sitting on her bed, before she could react, he forcefully closed her mouth with his strong hands so that she could not move and started to force himself on the young child. The old wicked family friend Uncle Johnny instead of being a guardian has sexually abused the child taking advantage of the situation. The innocent child was raped, while her Granny was asleep. She did not have the courage to wake her and inform her about what had happened to her. She is afraid of her grandmother’s bad temperament, now she has nobody to speak on her behalf, as her mother has left her; she is filled with a sense of rejection, which has crushed her self-assurance and confidence.

Uncle Johnny abused the young child sexually, knowing her vulnerable position as her parents are not there to care for her. Gwendolen is mentally and physically traumatized. He threatens her, “Your Mammy gonna England to join your Daddy. Dem no want you dere, but me look after you, right? ...This is our secret, right? Don’t tell anybody, because they’ll say you’re a bad gal. You’ll do anything for your Uncle Johnny, not so, Juney-Juney?” (G 22). Gwendolen is stunned by the action of Uncle Johnny as she could not believe that this was the man “who used to bring her...sweets and lemonade drinks...[and] rub oil on her grazed knee” (G 22). She is just a small child unable to understand what has happened to her, but her instinct cautioned that something absurd has happened to her.

Before Gwendolen could muster courage to inform her grandmother the next morning, Uncle Johnny came to her house as usual and began to offer help to her Granny at the bee farm. Granny praises Uncle Johnny for voluntarily helping her, without knowing the harm he had caused her innocent granddaughter. Gwendolen is sure that her Granny will not believe her words and she is confused as Uncle Johnny never showed his guilt and behaved normally to her Granny.

Gwendolen is bewildered by the frequent exploitation of Uncle Johnny. She was frightened that nobody would believe her and Uncle Johnny might turn the entire blame on her. Gwendolen starts bedwetting as she is psychologically upset. Granny Naomi is irritated by her continuous bedwetting and insults her in front of her friends. Every attempt taken by Granny, like making Gwendolen to starve to stop her bedwetting habit has only a reverse effect.

Gwendolen is heart broken by the sexual torment of Uncle Johnny. She is totally upset and perplexed; she is hesitant to inform this shameful episode to her Granny and decides to run away to her paternal grandmother. Contrary to Gwendolen's expectations, she is an unwelcome guest there and her Granny sends her back as quickly as possible to Granville. Gwendolen's action of running away made Granny Naomi empathize with the plight of the young girl, so Granny started to be considerate. Gwendolen disclosed her painful secret to her Granny. Granny called all the neighbours and accused Uncle Johnny publicly.

People started to thrash him for his aberrant deed. But Uncle Johnny put the entire blame on the innocent girl, "Don't fex me, man. How Ah fit do such a ting, when Naomi

dey dere? Me and Naomi friends long, long time, you know. Ah work my ass out on she bee farm, so this is thank you. Why June-June no shout, huh? Why she keep quiet?” (G 34). Granny Naomi was stunned but she is sure that she does not want any help from this wicked man anymore and drove him away from that spot. Women of the community protected her but later they spoke ill of Gwendolen.

Gwendolen had lost her reputation among the neighbours. At one point of time, even her closest friend Cocoa enquired her why she didn't shout for help, when Uncle Johnny tried to touch her for the first time, Gwendolen could not answer her. Though Granny Naomi accepted her granddaughter initially, in due course of time she started to find fault with her, as Uncle Johnny had stopped helping them in the bee farm. Granny accused her, “She rolled her backside when she moved about ... she was a bad girl, inviting trouble...” (G 36).

Gwendolen's dreams came true after a few years, when her parents called her to England. It is really tough for Granny to part with Gwendolen. On the day of her departure, Gwendolen is filled with excitement as she is going to join her parents. Gwendolen puts away her past and looks forward towards the future and to start a new life with her parents, “like a child again...not a little girl who had to play adult” (G 47). The twelve year old Gwendolen landed in England, her father Winston Brillianton came to the airport to pick her up. He was quite astounded to see his grown up daughter whom he has not seen for years. Gwendolen's heart filled with profound happiness.

It was new and smelt so fresh. It was too long and too big but she swam into it.

The coat gave her a warm secure feeling. The feeling of privacy 'it was like



walking about carrying your own house with you. You only showed that part you wished to be seen....' This was great. She could keep her secrets in the big coat.

(G 49)

Gwendolen, the little girl, who has been longing for this secure feeling and warmth has realized it in the company of her father. She is happy that she will be protected by her father. Gwendolen enjoyed her reunion with her family and felt secure as she had, "now arrived in the warm womb of her family" (G 52). Being with her parents provided her a sense of identity, for which she has been longing these many years. She meets her younger sister Cheryl and two younger brothers, Ronald and Marcus. Gwendolen enjoyed her stay in England with a heart filled with happiness and fulfillment. Gwendolen's father "was surprised and uneasy at the antics of this little girl, who was his daughter, and whom he was beginning to realize he had to work hard and wake up fatherly feelings towards" (G 49). She is welcomed by her mother and her little brothers, she soon learns that she has been called because her mother needs a person to take care of her young children, so her dream of enjoying her childhood is doomed.

Gwendolen observed that her mother; Sonia is too busy with her household chores. Sonia is not in a position to observe that her young growing daughter needs some time for her to accustom to her new environment. Sonia expects Gwendolen to be at her proposal and worried that she "did not jump at housework she was asked to do" (G 91). Gwendolen starts to support her mother in the household chores. She does not find the work so tough when compared to the work that she has to carry out for her grandmother in Granville, so Gwendolen accepts the role and happily enjoys doing the tasks allotted by her mother and

even takes care of her brothers in her absence. The morning rush to prepare breakfast and the swift baths and the fights between her younger siblings were “new sounds of security” (G 67) to her.

Gwendolen was happy to be introduced to the closest friends of her mother and father such as Gladys Odowis, Mr. Illochina, their landlord Mr. Aliyu and other Nigerians. Mrs. Gladys Odowis, Nigerian by birth, was economically better placed than Brillianton’s family. Mrs. Gladys Odowis suffered domestic violence, it was Sonia who helped and sheltered her from her chauvinistic husband, so they became good friends. Sonia introduces Gladys to Gwendolen as, “We good friends. She Nigerian, you know. But she a nice ‘oman” (G 66). Sonia used to talk about her elder daughter Gwendolen to Mrs. Gladys Odowis proudly as, “when June-June come, life easy for me, you know...” (G 62).

Mrs. Odowis faced an anguished life with her husband, but she being bound to tradition remains passive to her husband's torments. Her pain is expressed thus, “Well, his people won’t see all that beating and harassment. They’ll say he’s your husband, stay with him. And in your culture, it’s bad to talk about the beatings you receive from your husband outside the family. Many people think a wife who is beaten deserves to be beaten” (G 65). It is Sonia who stood by her during her hard times as a sister cum friend. Once Mrs. Gladys Odowis became unconscious as she was severely beaten by her husband. Sonia rescued her from her abusive husband. Sonia gets a certificate of proof from a doctor of physical battering. With the help of Sonia, Mrs. Gladys Odowis walked away from her husband, applied for a council house that is provided for refugee or deserted families. Gladys lived with her children by earning on her own. After a few days Mrs. Gladys found that her husband had married another woman.

Sonia wants her daughter Gwendolen to get acquainted with life in England. She asked her daughter Gwendolen to accompany her while dropping her younger brothers in their school. At school, Gwendolen noticed that there were so many mothers of other children in that premises but nobody interacted with her mother Sonia, to her amazement, they were not ready even to have a look at them. They were treated differently by the White people around; though Gwendolen and Sonia were standing, they behaved as though none of them were there. Gwendolen found that there is no friendly smile from anyone. She finds that “Everybody seemed to be standing in their little vacant islands, not touching, not talking, and just waiting for the gate to open” (G 59). She also noticed that her mother behaved as though she is accustomed to such discrimination. Sonia neither interacted with anyone nor heeded to the sarcastic remarks that crossed her way.

Though Gwendolen is not so much interested in studies, she is compelled by her mother to educate herself in order to sustain her stay in England. So arrangements were made and one fine day, accompanied by her father she went to her school. It is the first day of her school and first time in her life, she has been taught to pronounce her name correctly with the help of her White class teacher. She felt a sense of securing an identity at that moment. Soon after she returned from school, she informed her little brother, “No, Ah did not! And my name not June-June. My name is Gwendolen, or Gwen. Don’t call me no June-June no more” (G 79).

Gwendolen has understood the discrimination that exists around them in that alien land. She has noticed how people looked at their family differently. Habituated to such experiences she did not feel hurt at her new school, but she is surprised that some of her

White friends came forward voluntarily to help her in the initial days of her schooling. She felt humiliated as her name was enrolled in the list of children whose names are recommended for free dinner. She learnt to do craft work and drawings easily and she learnt to think and observe more. Academically she could not show any improvement because she had not attended any school when she was at Granville, Sonia kept her occupied with lot of household works that she did not get any time to devote for her studies and lastly she being a non-native speaker of English is unable to understand the lessons taught, these reasons make Gwendolen lacking in studies. She is reprimanded and was asked to attend the remedial classes that are arranged for weak students. “Gwendolen from the Carribean is clearly socialized as the Other; her problems with British English are interpreted as stupidity, which triggers her resistance and truancy at school. Instead of promoting assimilation, her English school generates alienation” (Meyer 338).

At school, Gwendolen is considered academically weak. Her classmate Philipa said that she has no work to be carried out at her home and she just enjoys her time with a lot of other things. She questioned her mother the reason for dumping more and more work on her, while her siblings did not have much work, she was thrashed by her mother Sonia, “You stay all day at dat school doing nutting, and when you come home, you have to help. You understand me. Dat’s why me send fe you to come, not just for education” (G 84). Gwendolen understood that they did not call her to pamper her as the eldest daughter. As their family needs were growing, Sonia wanted Gwendolen to take care of all the household work while she earns for the family. Sonia strictly said that being a girl she needs to be trained in household chores and must learn to be submissive. According to her mother, Gwendolen should look after her siblings and “to be under her” (G 91) carrying out her errands.

The Nigerian landlord Mr. Aliyu was one of their acquaintances in London. Sonia used to pronounce his name as Mr. Aulaas instead of Mr. Aliyu. Being a Nigerian, this mispronunciation provoked his anger, because his name possesses a deep family meaning in itself, so he too suffered the same identity problem as Gwendolen.

Being a Nigerian, with a deep family meaning to his name, he used to be annoyed when his name was badly pronounced, thereby rendering it meaningless. He could appreciate when white people would not bother to make the attempt, but when it came to black people like himself, the pill became very, very bitter indeed. But by now he had learned to regard it as one of the dehumanizing processes of existence you have to go through in a country that is not your own. (G 57)

Though Mr. Aliyu gets angered when his name is mispronounced, he too mispronounces Gwendolen name as 'Grandalee'. The relationship between Gwendolen's family and the house owner was not flexible, he never possessed high opinion on the Brillianton family and Brilliantons in turn considered him as a primitive person. The relationship turned worst when a telegram came for Brilliantons informing the death of Granny Naomi. Mr. Aliyu handed over the telegram to Winston. Winston requested him to read the telegram as he was illiterate. As per Nigerian culture, it is not a mark of etiquette to directly inform death and so he informed that she is very sick. This wrong information caused the Brillianton's to spend a lot of money for medicine, getting a loan to travel to Jamaica to meet Granny. The Brillianton's do not have enough time to verify the telegram message again with someone else, since Sonia was in a hurry to meet her mother.

If Mr. Brillianton had been a Nigerian, he would have guessed straight away that his mother-in-law had died. But the man had that part of his cultural heritage taken away from him by slavery ... the gulf which was made by slavery that separated a brother from a brother was still too wide and too deep to be crossed by a single narrow bridge made of the wooden plank of the English language.

(G 119-120)

Sonia came to know that her mother had died only after reaching Jamaica. Sonia would have been mentally prepared if she had known that her mother was no more, so her mother's demise was a shock to her. She became sick due to her travel and miscarriage. She became unconscious and was treated at the Church. Women of her community, her bosom friends and neighbours provide emotional support to her and handled her sympathetically with profound care; they stood by her, comforted and gave her time to regain from the psychological blow and to lament on the loss of her beloved mother. Her confused mind made her suspect that her husband and the Nigerian landlord had fooled her. She believed that Winston might have known of her mother's death and she could not think of the reason behind his intention.

Sonia sold the medicines that she had bought for her mother and used it for her treatment, when she slightly recovered from her mental illness, she started to retrospect, in England she never had a chance to think about herself, "there was always something for her not only to do but to worry about, talk about and even hurry about. And however much she hurried, she was always late for finishing the project" (G 129), for the first time she lived for herself. No family responsibility for her to rush to feed her children or to take care of her husband, which she believed to be her prime duty. She devoted her time to revive herself; she

enjoyed dressing and spent time with her friends going to Church and other places. When she completely recovered, a sudden feeling of guilt encapsulates her, for neglecting her duties as a wife and mother. “She must go back home. Home? Where-London? Home is where the people she loved lived. Her Mammy’s gone, and her Father too. But Ronald, Marcus, Cheryl baby, Gwendolen and Winston were all there in London” (G 140).

When Winston finds that his landlord Mr. Aliyu has misinterpreted the message to them, he shouts at his landlord, which ultimately leads to the break in relationship and the landlord orders them to leave his house. Winston is shocked by his announcement, but before he realises, everything is over. Winston along with his children had to move out of their rented house in a short span of time. Luckily, Winston and his children gets a council house like Mrs Gladys. The council house seems to be larger than their rented one and they are satisfied and Gwendolen takes the lead in the absence of her mother being the eldest daughter of the family. Winston is amazed by the looks of his own daughter, her blooming youthful spirit and her innocence attracted him. Gwendolen’s trouble of sexual harassment started again, from her own father who approached her, in the absence of her mother. One day when her father Winston approached her, Gwendolen did not oppose but remained submissive to his advancements.

She gave in to her father because she did not wish to cause trouble for anybody.

And if she could bear it with that stupid Uncle Johnny who forced himself on her, what of the Daddy she loved? It was a lot to give, but then could your own father hurt you?” ...“formed a big lump of hatred against her father, against all men.”...

“What game was her Daddy playing? The same game as Uncle Johnny played?

(G 191)

Gwendolen is disappointed by her father's action. Winston on the other hand, though repents for his action, he justified himself by arguing that he had watched Cheryl grow up, while Gwendolen was separated from her birth. He provides explanation that women should prevent men from touching them but it was Gwendolen who allowed him, the main reasons why he moved towards his little girl were that she used to stroll about in feeble gym slippers; forgetting that she was growing up to be a lady; and altogether, she looked like Sonia, her mom, "the type of woman he favoured, small, vulnerable, just like Sonia" (G 144).

Winston warranted his contemptible act thus, "Her young bosom taunted him. What could he do? He was not drunk. He just went in to her, hoping she would fight him off like any other woman. Because she was like any other woman to him ... he never really felt socially responsible for her" (G 144). "He was not prepared for the look of resignation on Gwendolen's face" (G 144). Instead of feeling shameful for his sinful act, Winston expressed his male chauvinistic nature when he found that his daughter Gwendolen is not a virgin, so he accused her as wicked one and shouted at her, ' "You allow men to do this to you before, June-June?". He had not expected it from Gwendolen the way Gwendolen let him take her, and made him mindful that she was not a virgin, "She had been taught...in this project she was already adept, much older than her age..." (G 145). Irritated that his little girl was not a virgin when he took her, he called her a bitch, "wicked gal, devil gal" (G 145).

The next morning without feeling guilty, Winston went to the Sunday church, Gwendolen was unable to recover from the mishap. It took her a long time to get ready for Church. When her father Winston started to preach about the sins of the world, she wondered if her father did not know that what he did to her last night was a grave sin.



She looked at him as if in a daze. Something was telling her that this man, though her father whom she loved dearly, was not going to get away with it. The pain was too deep to surface. “Uncle Johnny was a stupid old man. But what of her lovely Daddy? To her, he was dead now....” (G 146).

Gwendolen was able to overcome the psychological trauma caused by the ghastly sexual harassment by Uncle Johnny, but the second sexual assault by her father psychologically wrecked her which totally changed her outlook of life. Though Winston was guilty he didn't stop his nightly visit. After a period of time he started to avoid her which was unusual and frightful. In the meantime, she could sense some changes in her body and found that she is pregnant. She dropped out of school, stayed at home and attempted to hide her condition. “Incest manifests itself as the internalization of the despicable: a tragic inward turn through which the black man misuses his paltry power, expresses his rage by preying on his weak daughter, violates boundaries and betrays her trust” (Ogunyemi, *Africa Wo/man Palava* 264).

Gwendolen secluded herself from others, one day she happens to meet a jubilant young man, named Emmanuel and he is a Greek, his innocence and youthful spirit attracts her. He becomes her companion, their likes are identical and they begin to spend time together. Winston never intruded in their relationship; he even allowed their closeness, so that he could blame Emmanuel for her pregnancy. Soon it was evident that Gwendolen was pregnant and people started questioning her; it was a painful situation for Gwendolen and Winston.

Gwendolen is not in position to reveal the truth to anyone; Emmanuel on the other hand believes that he has made her pregnant. He is thrashed by his family for the

shameful act that he has done to an innocent girl. When Sonia returns to London, she is initially shocked to hear the changes that had occurred. Mrs. Gladys informs her about the situation that prevails in her house and Sonia reaches home filled with hatred and anger. Gwendolen's pregnancy was evident, as she is only sixteen years old, the family is visited by the social workers.

When the social workers interrogated, Sonia rushed to Emmanuel's house and offended them and shouted at them stating that it was they who were responsible for her daughter's situation. Sonia trusted her husband in whose care she had left Gwendolen. Gwendolen was sure that Sonia would do anything to safeguard her husband. After the departure of the social workers, Sonia became so furious with Gwendolen, "Sonia's actions were fierce. One could easily have confused her anger with hatred. Could a mother hate her daughter? Impossible. She carried her for nine whole months, after all. Had a mother any right to suspect her daughter? Unimaginable" (G 169).

Sonia's hatred and anger made her treat Gwendolen harshly. Gwendolen loses hope and leaves their house completely deceived, she is found sleeping in a park by a policeman and is taken to the nearby police station. When she is enquired about her parent's details and what has happened to her, "Gwendolen screamed. Something that had been bottled inside her for so long seemed to escape, and her mouth gave vent to a jumble of Jamaican patois and London school cockney. Her voice was raised and she talked and kept talking in different pitches." (G 176) At the end of her emotional outburst, she falls down unconscious and is found to be seriously ill.

As policemen could not trace any details from Gwendolen, she was directed to a mental asylum. There she was under the care of doctors and nurses, they calmed her down, initially she was non cooperative, but slowly their counseling helped her to regain her senses. After she regained her health, the doctors recommended abortion, as she is too young to take care of a baby. To the surprise of all the nurses and doctors, Gwendolen remained stubborn in refusing to abort the baby. It is for the first time in her life Gwendolen has taken a firm decision that she needs her father's child and she is going to have it. She is clear in her choice, for she believes that the baby is her future and a reason for her being alive. Gwendolen thus transforms into the new woman ready to accept the repercussions of her mistakes.

The New Woman represents a theory of personhood where the individual exists as an independent entity rather than her kinship relations, where she has a responsibility to realize her potential for happiness rather than to accept her role, where she has indefinable value rather than quantitative financial worth and where she must reason about her own values rather than fit into a stereotyped tradition. (Stegeman)

The hospital authorities informed about the health condition of Gwendolen to her parents, though Gwendolen resisted revealing her parent's details, they somehow managed to get it and informed Sonia and Winston. They visit the hospital; Winston is expressionless and silent, while acting as if he is feeling worried about his daughter's state. Gwendolen is astonished to witness the reaction of her mother and understand that her mother does not want her. Shortly after their return from the hospital, Sonia receives news about the sudden death of Winston. He has accidentally fallen into the drum of tar at his workplace. Sonia, who was upset by Gwendolen's pregnancy, was shocked to hear the sudden death

of her husband. “Winston Brillianton died, possibly suicidal in a fire which mirrors his own spent life of provincialism, racial subjugation and incest” (Yongue 88).

Sonia receives insurance money after the sudden demise of Winston. She expected that the insurance company would provide her more money and spent it luxuriously. She enjoyed a life of luxury, but her dreamy world completely collapsed when insurance company denied the amount that they have sanctioned because Winston’s death is confirmed that it was a case of suicide. Sonia is broken by the news from the insurance company; she has to sell some of the furniture that she has brought as a loan, to add to her misery, she is compelled to share Winston’s insurance money with Gwendolen. Sonia’s anger turned towards Gwendolen, she blamed Gwendolen for all that has happened to her.

In the meantime, Gwendolen gives birth to a baby girl and Gwendolen shares her wishes to one of the African nurses, Ama in the hospital, that she wishes to provide a significant and special name that should reveal to the whole world how important and noteworthy the child was to her. Gwendolen with the help of the nurse chooses a Yoruba name to her new born baby girl as ‘Iyamide’ which means, “my mother, my female friend, my female savior, my anything - nice -you-can-think-of-in-a-woman’s form” (G 210). Gwendolen intends to inform others that she has finally got all she wanted, “everything I ever wanted, warmth, security, comfort, is all here in a female form” (GN 237).

Gwendolen is provided with a separate house and money by Social Security Services. Gwendolen has made up her mind to endure the pain, she smells a sense of freedom around her and she is confident enough. She is able to feel that she has got her identity which she was looking for all these years. She made up her mind not to disturb

anyone, as her family doesn't care even to inform her about the death of her father.

The new found land where she has arrived with much hope has completely provided her the inner strength and courage to face the world. Sonia is informed about the birth of the baby. She is so angry that she is not ready to meet Gwendolen.

Mrs. Gladys advises Sonia that she must meet her daughter. When Sonia reached the hospital she found Gwendolen completely changed, she is no more the June-June but a matured person. She sees, "Gwendolen standing there, a grown woman in a white running suit, carrying a tray full of tea-things. She placed the tray on a plain pine table...and ran to her mother" (G 237). Sonia with vengeance and hatred in her heart reluctantly sees the baby, but was stunned by the appearance of the baby, "Sonia went towards the cot and was transfixed. She opened her mouth and closed it several times as if she was drowning. Winston's dark-rimmed eyes seemed to jump from the child's face to mock her" (G 236). She guessed what would have happened to her young and innocent daughter. Women are trapped in the institution of marriage and the gender bias makes her a victim as this institution compels women to accept certain disheartening happenings for instance "the daughter to 'accept' incest/rape by her father, the mother to deny that it is happening, [and] the battered wife to stay on with an abusive husband" (Rich 134).

I was Emmanuel who remains with Gwendolen during her sufferings. Gwendolen praises Emmanuel for he taught her to read and announces that she is now able to, "read a whole book written by a black woman, and I will read a lot more" (G 212). She renders all this credit to her young companion who has transformed her into an intelligent woman. She expressed her gratitude to Emmanuel thus, "I am so glad I can now read. I am like that person that was blind who became suddenly sighted when Jesus touched his eyes. I can

now share the thoughts of other men and women who lived outside Granville. You now make me see” (G 213). Gwendolen has acquired the power of analyzing to identify between good and bad. Gwendolen in her maddened state has been taken to the asylum, but it turns out to be a bodhi tree which provided her shelter and protection and made her realise the reality of life. Gwendolen firmly assures that with the new born willpower that she could “educate herself and get a good job” (G 182).

The ritual of seeking out a name for Iyamide with a Ghanaian woman enables Gwendolen to embark on a spiritual journey to cleanse the self and to reach out to her African ancestors- in this case, ancestral spirits from the Yoruba tradition. In so doing, she reclaims her ancestral heritage and multiple identities, and perhaps feels no longer as invisible as before. In that moment, she can see more clearly, for she knows her name and its cultural origin; she knows who she is, where she has been, and what she has experienced emotionally, physically, and culturally. (Mhando 60)

Mr. Ilochina, an Igbo is a close friend and colleague of Winston Brillianton. When Ilochina asked whether he would follow polygamy, Winston angrily replied, “Don’t be stupid, man. Me a Christian, nuh. Dem days people not Christians. Dem be uncivilized African Muslims. Nuh I know better” (GN 126). Winston suffered guilty consciousness for the incest he had committed. He asks his friend Ilochina, “But do you marry your daughters?” (G 142). Stunned by his question, he said, “A daughter belonged to the father, her bride price was his. If the daughter was chaste, it would enhance her father’s position and make him richer. So why should a father wish to ruin his own wealth?” (G 142). Mr. Ilochina also adds an incident, how a man who had molested his little girl

was punished for such an unpardonable sin by the women of his village, they “pounded him into pulp with their cooking utensils” (G 143). Ilochina, informs Winston, if the sinner is not punished then it is like doing harm to our own earth. He said, “If he is not discovered, he will surely be killed by an earth force” (G 144).

Mr. Ilochina meets Sonia a few months after the death of Winston and narrates the incident of Winston’s death, after a gas blast he fell into a tank of tar. Ilochina finally provides a clue to the perplexed Sonia, “Gas and electricity are Earth forces we call *Ani*. They have their way of meting out vengeance” (G 200). Ilochina is able to correlate the enquiry of Winston and his sudden death and he is able to guess what would have happened to Gwendolen. So he informs Sonia indirectly that it is the wrath of the earth that has punished Winston for his inexcusable sin that he has done to his own innocent daughter. When Sonia was worried about his burial Ilochina says, “Don’t worry, Mrs.Brillianton. You buy everything here, even beautiful funerals. This is not like African people. In my town, our people will not bury your husband, I’m sorry to say. But here in England, money buys honour” (G 199).

Though the primary theme of the novel are incest and rape, the theme of racism is felt throughout the novel. The characters try to assimilate into the Western culture. Gwendolen and her friends Shivorn and Cocoa, were fascinated by the stories of the ‘moder kontry’ and longed to visit this white world feeling that their status quo would be raised if they had a chance of living with the Western elites. When Gwendolen reaches England for the first time she is amazed to watch a white man, their cab driver thanking her father, which would not happen in her native land. On the other hand, her own Granny Elinor, rejected her own grand daughter who runs to her for affection because of the sexual harassment that she faced in her household in Granville. Gwendolen is accustomed to the comments

of Granny Naomi, “Granny had always said that people with pale colour put on airs as if they had two heads. Gwendolen had accepted it as natural especially after her encounter with Granny Elinor. But here, a real whitey thanked her Daddy” (G 51).

In England, she is alienated as a Caribbean girl, she is not accepted as a intelligent person though she is good at craft work and other things, the teachers consider her as stupid since she is incompetent in her studies and could not speak British English like other white children in the school. Not just the young Gwendolen has undergone the cruel implications of racism, even Sonia experiences it in all the places, but being matured and accustomed to such tortures she remains passive to the comments and their denial. When Sonia returned to England from Jamaica the second time after the demise of her mother, she is commented by the female officer in the airport, who arrogantly criticises at her outfit, Sonia remains unresponsive to her words,

It never occurred to Sonia to tell her to go to hell and to stay there, or to remind her that her false hair piece was askew and that it did not match her natural hair. Or that her dentures made her look like a grinning skeleton. Such confident observations were left to the likes of her children who were not going to be satisfied with half measures from the society in which they were born and in whose reshaping they were playing their parts. (G 160)

Mrs. Gladys, Sonia’s comrade and sister, is an educated lady and is of higher status than Sonia shares how she feels broken every time whenever she is tortured by racist comments.

She still could not cope with this type of solid wall of indifferences in which people look past you, or on top of your head, or stare at your shoes, actually look



beyond you so as not to look at your face, all of which was to tell you that as far as they were concerned you were not there. And like a child begging to be noticed, she'd invariably caught herself talking in a rather exuberant way, a way which she hated and which was against the very grain of her nature. She hated herself for it afterwards, and had to hold herself very tight to prevent her exploding and attacking those who with their uncaring attitude were reducing her to the level of a child begging for attention. (G 60)

Gladys recommends Sonia to select dull light colours such as grey, though Sonia and Gladys prefer bright colours to wear because the people usually looked bright colours as cheap in England. Winston becomes nervous when acquainted with white people. He is dumbfounded when Gwendolen's teacher questions him. Though he is a preacher in his church, he is not able to handle these types of circumstances. He feels ashamed of his own identity in the alien environment.

The misfortune that Gwendolen faces is mainly due to the insecure feelings that she had developed from her early childhood. The main reason for Gwendolen's distress is lack of emotional support from her mother and grandmother. Granny blames Gwendolen for tempting Uncle Johnny with her walk, "Gwendolen knew now that whenever Granny Naomi found faults in everything she did, food was running short. She was the scapegoat. And but for her, Granny could pop in at Uncle Johnny's for fish and beans. Her speaking out closed this channel" (G 99). Such sarcastic criticisms make her heart broken. Her mother Sonia on the other hand, did the same thing to her. "Her mother, like Granny Naomi, had a subtle way of making her sound silly. Now, she felt awfully stupid" (G 84).

Gwendolen's mother and grandmother who had to protect her left her uncared for, without understanding her innate longing for their affection and protection. Gwendolen cries when her mother shouts at her for moving so closely with her own father, "Oh please God, don't let me be blamed for laughing with me daddy. ... This was bound to be different. After all, this man was her Daddy. But why did her mother give her the eye of suspicion Granny Naomi gave her a long-time ago in Granville." (G 88) Gwendolen could visualize her Granny whenever her mother Sonia finds fault with her instead of being a solace to her wounded heart.

Gwendolen has no friends to share her secrets with, or to shoulder her pains which eventually turn her mad during her pregnancy. It is her friends at school, the nurse at the asylum and the Greek boy Emmanuel who rebuild her lost hope. When she was with her Granny Naomi and her mother Sonia, she was unable to take any decision even in any trivial matters, but she breaks her silence and takes a firm and courageous decision of having her father's child. Carole Boyce Davies states that "Motherhood and/or mothering thus become central and defining tropes in Black female reconstruction" (G135).

Gwendolen is ensnared by like sexual harassment at the age of eight, then Granny's rejection, followed by incomprehensible western life and affectionless mother, her father's sexual incest, which results in pregnancy which made her to face hatred and humiliation. Resolution of Gwendolen connects her to the long-established culture of her indigenous practice of motherhood, the role which is adored and longed for by every Igbo woman of her culture. Her suffering transforms her into a young woman of wisdom, who takes up the responsibility of taking care of her child. "Gwendolen is by no means guaranteed a rosy future. Yet she has at a relatively young age discarded some of the cultural, racial

and sexual baggage which still weighs her mother down, and seems positioned to build a conscious self-unhampered by oppressive cultural and sexual norms of Jamaica or England” (Iyer 133).

Gwendolen is a symbolic representation of a Nigerian woman, who is bound with courage, ready to take up any challenge in life for the sake of their family and their children. Though Gwendolen is a victim of sexual abuse, she aims for emancipation and self-actualisation. “Gwendolen’s – new infant Iyamide (synonymous with warmth, security and self-fulfillment),... represent the promise of a new world that can successfully fulfil dreams that promote female transcendence” (Mezu 145). The baby represents the hope that the new generation of African women would enjoy the benefits of the struggles that their mothers had undergone thus paving the way for them to have more choices and opportunities in life.